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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 06 PARIS 000151

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/16/2017

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SUBJECT: COUNTERTERRORISM CONSULTATIONS WITH THE FRENCH

Classified By: POLITICAL MINISTER COUNSELOR JOSIAH ROSENBLATT FOR REASON 14. (b) AND (d)

¶1. (S) SUMMARY: A USG Delegation led by Ambassador-at-large for Counterterrorism, Hank Crumpton, held strategic counterterrorism consultations with senior French officials December 7. The two delegations exchanged views on the overall threat situation, improvements to both countries' counterterrorism laws, and on specific threats from the Maghreb, Iraq and the greater Middle East. Other topics included Afghanistan, the PKK, Islamic radicalization in Europe, new U.S. C/T initiatives and counterterrorism tools. Both delegations noted the utility of broad based policy exchanges in addition to our already vigorous operational cooperation. U.S. and French officials welcomed the opportunity to continue interagency consultations of this kind, and lauded current bilateral collaboration on terrorism, despite some policy differences. END SUMMARY

MERIT OF BROAD-BASED EXCHANGES

¶2. (C) MFA Assistant Secretary equivalent Philippe Carre opened the consultations by characterizing U.S.-French counterterrorism cooperation as good, particularly at the operational level. GOF officials appreciated the substantive nature of these exchanges, he said. Carre also underlined the importance of convincing the public that national counterterrorism efforts were vital to security. Effectively explaining counterterrorism policies to our domestic constituencies, Carre emphasized, was a vital aspect of French policy. This led in 2005-2006 to the GOF's "white paper" on terrorism, a report Carre called not altogether satisfying, but an exercise in compromise that moved forward thinking and rhetoric on terrorism in the GOF. Crumpton agreed that bilateral CT cooperation, despite certain policy differences, was excellent, and added that international cooperation such as existed between the U.S. and France, was fundamental to our success in the field. France's white paper, Crumpton said, was a "good intellectual exercise" and concurred that communication with the public was a key element in winning the war on terror. Both delegations welcomed the opportunity to continue broad-based interagency consultations in Washington and Paris.

GENERAL THREAT ASSESSMENTS

¶3. (S) Carre noted that 9/11 had transformed public and official awareness of terrorism. France's vision, he said, was now more precise; the overall threat is viewed as growing

in Europe and around the globe. Carre emphasized that a revolution was underway in the Middle East--countries in the region were beginning to make the distinction between political issues and the terror used by an increasing number of non-state actors. While the U.S. may not attach a great deal of importance to the UN, Carre said, GOF officials found it played a vital role, especially with countries like Egypt.

The UN was a place where distinctions could be made by nations, and responses could be moderated. Carre emphasized that the overall terror threat was changing in nature and in magnitude. Recruitment appeared to be on the rise. For Europe, the London and Madrid bombings were extremely worrying. Threats, he insisted, had to be anticipated and work done to keep WMD out of the hands of terrorists. The numbers of terrorist sympathizers was on the rise in "Old Europe," Carre insisted, and it must be stopped. Diversification of recruits was a serious issue in Europe. France's past as a colonial power in the Maghreb had created strong domestic North African communities, as well as strong, but often tense, commercial and political ties to North Africa. The Pakistani community, too, was growing and was not well understood in France. The profound transformation in these communities posed a serious potential threat to France and its allies-- as seen already in the UK. The new global threat, Carre said, had to be confronted with global thinking. The problem needed to be better defined, and a solution found.

14. (S) Crumpton agreed in general terms with Carre's analysis. He noted improvement in operational capabilities, and credited this to international cooperation, both among states, but also with non-state actors. He argued that contrary to Carre's assertion, the U.S. believed the UN was

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important in the war on terror. It offered a forum for discussion and provided legitimacy; some important actions had been taken in the Security Council. But the U.S. also believed that the institution could be more operational and effective. Crumpton noted some of the significant features of the current threat: Smaller enemy forces were difficult to detect. These micro actors were having macro impact on the global community. Technological advancements also brought together micro actors in ways never before imaginable; cyberspace was a safe-haven for terrorists. The international community, he underlined, had yet to agree on how to respond to the growing threat. Should we emphasize military might, diplomacy or economic power? Despite our strengths, he said, we had not yet managed to agree on what vocabulary to use; "war" was not a word uttered in European governments. Our ability to engage, to adapt our laws, and to philosophically and morally define our doctrines of war were serious challenges, Crumpton argued.

COUNTERTERRORISM LEGISLATION

15. (C) U.S. Assistant Attorney General Bruce Swartz praised the law enforcement relationship between France and the U.S. Existing U.S. legislation, he said, had three key objectives: reform of the intelligence and law enforcement structure; strengthen current legislation; and create a legislative framework for military commissions and unlawful combatants. Swartz explained the laws enacted since 2001 including the USA Patriot Act and the Military Commissions Act. The Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) modernization Act, he noted, remained under consideration. Crumpton added that the political culture in the U.S. was still adjusting to the threat, and that the process was complex and difficult. In response, Pierre Thenard explained the various, rather lofty, executive powers held by the French government, including electronic surveillance and detention authority. He argued that because of France's past experience with terrorism, the public largely accepted broad executive authority. Saffar noted that judicial powers over terrorism issues rested with a special Paris court, and that the

Ministry of Justice maintained some oversight powers. Thenard and Saffar were careful to add that while French police have great discretionary power, they are also part of a highly regulated structure. In January 2006, Thenard said, the legislature passed additional counterterrorism legislation that had codified many current practices and put in place stiffer sentences for terrorists and those who provided material support.

THREAT FROM THE MAGHREB; GSPC

¶6. (S) Teixeira (MOD) explained that two primary threats currently emanated from the Maghreb: GSPC (Salafist Movement for Preaching and Combat) and encouragement of fundamentalist ideology. The state of the threat from the Maghreb in France, Teixeira said, included five characteristics: 1) the tie between local movements and the global jihad; 2) recruitment of French citizens of North African origin; 3) the resilience of networks and jihadists; 4) the relative failure of stopping the spread of fundamentalist ideology, and 5) a lack of economic growth. GOF authorities have dismantled numerous networks on French territory, and arrested a number of would-be terrorists, but the threat, he said, may have only temporarily dissipated.

¶7. (S) Duthe's (DST) report on GSPC and its activities largely tracked with U.S. assessments. Duthe reported that the GSPC was acting like a "wounded animal" whose recent merger with al-Qaeda was an attempt to reinvent itself. The latest arrests in Mali and Mauritania as well as the dismantling in France of networks sending jihadists to Iraq likely disrupted some of GSPC's strategy, but to what extent they may have eroded the group's capabilities remained unknown. The recent amnesty in Algeria was complicating matters, Teixeira said, and possibly adding to what had been previously dwindling numbers. U.S. Analyst David O'Connor noted that the U.S. was not convinced that the amnesty had much of an effect on the overall organization. Recent attacks in Algeria, using IED's were worrisome, but it was not yet clear if these were a result of the al-Qaeda merger, O'Connor said, or a reaction to the amnesty. O'Connor agreed that the revival of the European networks was of concern, particularly

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the fact that some material support appeared to come from France. Intentions and operational capacity, everyone agreed, were still unclear. Carre added that the aftermath of the amnesty was still too early to judge but that, in any case, GSPC remained a significant threat to Europe. He added that young Muslims in France, however, were currently more interested in going to Iraq to fight Americans than carrying out local attacks, but that their attention might soon be drawn home again.

IRAQ AND THE MIDDLE EAST

¶8. (S) Crumpton emphasized that ongoing operations in Iraq were key to preventing it from becoming a safe-haven for international terrorists. Iran, of course, was the major concern, but Syria, Jordan, and Turkey would all be immediately affected. Carre questioned how involved Iran was in carrying out attacks in Iraq. The Iranian regime, Crumpton clarified, did not abide by international law, and was actively supporting the Shia through, at the very least, manipulation of proxies and by allowing their territory to be used for the transit of weapons and foreign fighters. Al-Qaeda, Crumpton added, was seeking to foment sectarian violence in Iraq, and was able to use a limited number of well placed attacks to further escalate already tense relations. Carre wondered if al-Qaeda's role was significant or if most of the violence was now attributable to sectarian violence. He also questioned Crumpton's view of Iraq as a base for international terrorism-- could they effectively conduct operations from Iraq on the international stage?

Crumpton responded that al-Qaeda did not need to carry out many attacks to be effective at encouraging overall violence and that there was no question that Iraq had already been used as a base for international terrorism: the attacks in Jordan had been planned from the outskirts of Baghdad.

¶9. (S) French officials mused about a war between Saudi Arabia and Iran being carried out by proxy in Iraq and noted that the war in Iraq had created a special problem in France: it was now a major magnet for young French Muslims. Al-Qaeda was clearly benefiting from the war by attracting the sympathies of young Muslims around the world and accelerating radicalization. The phenomenon was a catalyst for home-grown terrorists. Revolutionary discourse was now commonplace, and not necessarily religious in nature; something that was more appealing to French Muslims. The internet, they said, had served to create home-grown terrorists in France. Carre underlined his belief that Iraq was transforming the discourse from the religious to the political, a revolution of sorts, which was dangerous but also gave us the opportunity to combat it with reason.

¶10. (S) Crumpton responded that we recognized the Iran/Saudi proxy war and the Sunni/Shia regional conflict-- these were key reasons we had to deny Iraq as a safe-haven for terrorists. Crumpton agreed that foreign fighters were a special concern--not only for their acquired tactical skills, but the leadership they were providing to other extremists. He added, however, that many came to Iraq, but few left. Indeed, he said, those that end up in training camps or academies in the Sahel might pose a larger threat in the future. As far as al-Qaeda, Crumpton noted, it had always been political, not religious in nature. Iraq, he said, is not the single paramount issue. Many other geopolitical issues existed before it and will exist after-- including the Palestinian/Israeli problem.

HIZBALLAH

¶11. (S) Cruciani (DST) reported that no Hizballah cells have thus far been detected in France. Several hundred sympathizers, however, are known to reside on French soil, and are chiefly Lebanese Shia. They have demonstrated peacefully and the GOF is aware they have contact with the Iranian embassy in Paris. French officials judged the threat against European targets as relatively weak. They remain under surveillance, along with those who assist them in any financing.

AFGHANISTAN

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¶12. (S) Kilcullen provided the U.S. analysis of the evolving threat in Afghanistan since 2001, including the professionalization and organization of the enemy. Kilcullen pushed French officials to understand the inherent weaknesses of the enemy, and the utility of counter-insurgency methods to contain and fight the threat. He noted that counterterrorism was a smaller part of the overall problem in Afghanistan at the moment; al-Qaeda is present as a catalyst and a beneficiary, but not the key factor. U.S. forces had a steep learning curve but were making good progress; unfortunately many of our partners seemed to have reverted to peacekeeping as their principal stance, despite no real peace to keep and a problem in the south that was going to move elsewhere if not adequately contained. A major spring offensive by the insurgency was likely, Kilcullen said, and we had time to prepare now. Carre responded that we needed to better identify the enemy and our mission in Afghanistan. The U.S., British, and Canadians, Carre added, had adopted a strategy of severe military incursions that might be characterized as unhelpful. The Europeans had a different

outlook. Stronger counter-insurgency methods might not be welcome; foreign armies could only stay so long and ultimately this was an Afghan problem.

¶13. (S) Kilcullen explained that counter-insurgency was not only military might, but substantially political and economic in nature as well. He added that reliable current polling data suggested that the majority of the Afghan population still thought Coalition forces were part of the solution and welcomed those forces to assist in attacking the problem. The Taliban was not popular with the Afghan people as a result of among other things, their poppy policy. The data showed that the people support the national and local Afghan governments, but that corruption at the provincial government level had eroded a great deal of trust-- something that was key to any solution. Counter-insurgency methods would help to address these shortfalls and solve the root causes of the problem. Carre asked Kilcullen to provide further information, when possible, on counter-insurgency methods, the nature of the threat, and any polling data available.

PKK

¶14. (S) Cruciani (DST) briefed on the PKK's activities, calling Europe the group's primary logistical base, both for organization and finance. France, she said, is attractive for the PKK because of its history with Kurdish leaders, and because it is the home of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg-- a key political lobbying target. Intelligence, he said, suggests that the organization is facing some difficulties recruiting in Europe, but that some young Kurds are certainly recruited out of Western Europe. France and Europe, he added, are not PKK targets. European governments may be considered oppressive in certain measures they take against the group, but the EU is generally safe for them and it would not be in their interest to sacrifice that safety. Two large political meetings had recently been held in France-- something on which authorities kept a close eye. Cruciani said that the key issue now was possible Turkish intervention in northern Iraq that could develop into a critical and dangerous confrontation. S/CT's Ted Allegra noted that we largely shared the GOF's assessment, and that the U.S. government responded to this assessment by appointing General Ralston as a special envoy to look at the overall problem in Northern Iraq. In addition, Allegra said U.S. officials had already met with several European governments, and noted that there seemed to be a shared feeling that the problem had to be addressed, not only in Ankara, but also in Europe. Some European capitals, however, have exhibited little political will to respond, and this remained an impediment to further action. As a result, he urged the GoF to use its influence within the EU to enhance recognition that the PKK was indeed a threat and that the issue deserved attention. In any case, the U.S. would be working with the Turks to improve their capacity to develop information in a way that would demand a stronger law enforcement response.

ISLAMIC RADICALIZATION IN EUROPE

¶15. (S) Bernardi (DCRG) briefly discussed Muslim

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radicalization and recruitment in France and Europe. He reviewed four key areas: 1) factors leading to radicalization; 2) profiles of radicalized people; 3) profiles of jihadists; and 4) concerns for the future. Many individuals targeted for recruitment, he said, are young immigrants with difficult access to employment, and who are stuck in a cycle because of their delinquent pasts. They find an identity in Islam; for them, religion is a way to oppose the society in which they live. Two schools of Islamic thought are active in France, the Tablighi and the Salafists. Tablighi radicals were active in recruiting young

French Muslims for Afghanistan. The Salafist movement had many more followers and mosques in France, however, but also found other ways of recruiting-- primarily through social activities. Young charismatic men, sometimes well educated, participated in the movement and were quickly improving their methods of recruitment and diversifying their targets. The radicalization process, he said, appeared to be shortening. Administrative repression was highly effective, including expulsions and the monitoring of Islamic centers. S/CT's Kilcullen pointed out that the tactics used for radicalization were those of subversion. Radicalization, he noted, was not an accident; there were active and often very organized elements involved in the process. Cook added that the process of countering subversion had to include providing positive leadership to disaffected youth-- with the aim of increasing their inclusion as citizens with a certain sense of responsibility in the nation state.

U.S. INITIATIVES

¶16. (C) S/CT officials Allegra and Kilcullen described the Regional Strategic Initiative (RSI) and the counter-insurrection (COIN) model that has been discussed in several capitals. The French found the RSI to be a good model and noted that the GOF was looking into ways to revamp its own methods for strategy development. COIN had interested several MOD officials and the GOF was interested in further developing these discussions.

FINANCIAL TOOLS

¶17. (C) Segura (Finance Ministry) provided an overview of the asset-freezing mechanisms available under French and EU legal authorities. She also provided an update on the latest amendments to French legislation, which closed a loophole for the financial tools available against EU members resident in France.

COMMENT

¶18. (C) Both delegations were positive about the discussions and agreed that regular interagency consultations should continue. Iraq and Afghanistan were the most debated topics, and took up a great majority of the conversation. Participants agreed that despite seven hours reserved for the talks, some subjects were not given the attention they deserved. Future agendas should be narrower and allow for in depth focus on a few key issues.

PARTICIPANTS

¶19. (SBU) U.S.: Ambassador-at-large for Counterterrorism, Hank Crumpton, Brigadier General Mark O. Schissler, USAF, Joint Staff Deputy Director for the War on Terror; Ambassador Brian Carlson, State Public Affairs; Bruce Swartz, U.S. Assistant Attorney General, Department of Justice; Josiah Rosenblatt, Political Minister Counselor, Embassy Paris; Ted Allegra, State; Nerissa Cook, State; David Kilcullen, State; Marc Norman, State; David O'Connor, State; Lt. COL Benjamin Moody, DAO, Embassy Paris; Kenneth J. Harris, DOJ, Embassy Paris; Otto Van Maerssen, Embassy Paris; and John Espinoza, Embassy Paris.

¶20. (SBU) France: MFA Assistant Secretary-equivalent for Strategic Affairs, Security, and Disarmament, Philippe Carre, Francois Richier, Carre's principal deputy; Pierre Thenard, Deputy for Security and Counterterrorism; Louis Blin, Deputy Director for Security and Counterterrorism; Caroline Lindimer, MFA; Francois Revardeaux, MFA; Michel Miraillet,

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Director for International Affairs, General Secretariat for

the National Defense, Office of the Prime Minister (SGDN); Bernard Salvagnol, Intelligence Committee, SGDN; Vianney Basse, SGDN; Pierre Gacic, SGDN; Pierre Cruciani, DST (France's internal security service inside the Ministry of Interior); Fabienne Duthe, DST; Anthony Bernardi, DCRG (France's national police intelligence service inside the Ministry of Interior); Jean-Eric Lacour, SCTIP (Ministry of Interior's police unit for international technical cooperation); Patrick Texeira, DS (Strategic Affairs, Ministry of Defense); Valerie Lanney de Courten, DS; Frank Crispino; BLAT (Counterterrorism Bureau, Ministry of Defense); Karine Segura, DGTPE (General Directorate for finance and political economy, Ministry of Finance); and Alain Saffar, DACG (Bureau of criminal affairs and pardons, Ministry of Justice).

¶21. This cable has been cleared with S/CT delegation staff.

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